CHAPTER 6. BEYOND THE TIN MINES

The previous two chapters have outlined that thousands of Chinese tin miners were displaced from the mines in the first half of the 20th century due to increased mechanisation and the demise of the open-cast sector, economic depression and production restriction and Japanese Occupation. This chapter seeks to complete the historical overview of Chinese tin mining labour by looking "beyond the tin mines" to examine what became of these displaced labourers. The chapter is divided into two sections. Section 1 briefly overviews the avenues open to displaced mining coolies from about 1910 onwards. By far the greatest number, it will be seen, moved into agricultural "squatter" settlements on the edge of the Malayan jungle. Here they undertook food and cash-crop cultivation. Following on from this Section 2 provides a case study of the development of agricultural squatter communities in the Kinta Valley.

1. FROM TIN MINERS TO AGRICULTURAL SQUATTERS:

Malaya is said to have experienced no real economic distress prior to the beginning of the Great Depression in 1929-30. But due to unsound ventures and fluctuating tin prices occasional unemployment was often experienced in the tin mining industry.[1] Prior to the 20th century this did not constitute too serious a problem; on the whole numbers were generally small and, at least for the able-bodied, employment was usually available in other sectors of the economy such as on government road and railroad construction programs.[2] From the early

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[1] In 1896, for example, the Selangor State Surgeon observed that several thousand coolies had been thrown out of employment and were wandering about from place to place in search of work. Having no regular source of food many became weak and anaemic and drifted in large numbers to vagrant hospitals where they were refused admission until, succumbing to one disease or another, they were brought to the wards in an almost hopeless condition. The admission of poor, unemployed and aged Chinese tin mining labourers to government hospitals became an accepted practice in the 1890s. In Perak, decrepit wards were maintained for aged and destitute Chinese mining coolies. Maintenance costs for the wards were met by Chinese employers through a levy of a few cents on each pikul of tin produced. In 1909 the wards were reported to have "a daily average of 160 paupers". Reported in the *Malay Mail* (Kuala Lumpur), August 13, 1897, p.3.

[2] For example, in early 1896 some 5,000 unemployed Chinese mine labourers found work on the construction of the trunk road being built from Selangor to Pahang.

decades of the 20th century, however, the displacement of much larger numbers of Chinese tin mining coolies was of much greater significance.

Briefly, there were four avenues open to displaced Chinese tin mining labourers in the period after about 1910. Firstly, it is probable that some mining coolies were absorbed into the rapidly developing rubber industry.[3] Table 43 below indicates the size and trend of estate employment in the rubber industry in the period 1907-1938.[4]

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[3] Between 1910 and 1914 Malaya emerged as the world's largest producer of plantation rubber. Over the next three years rubber displaced tin as Malaya's premier commodity export, contributing approximately 72 per cent of FMS export earnings. For a detailed study of the development of the rubber industry see J.H.Drabble, *Malayan Rubber: the Interwar Years*. London, Macmillan, 1991. Parmer, *Colonial Labour Policy*, pp 1 *et seq*.

[4] Estates constituted holdings below 100 acres. It is important to note that Chinese immigration was subject to restriction after 1914 and 1928 and quota after 1933. Thus immigration could not have, by itself, accounted for the large increase in the number of Chinese employed on rubber estates after these dates. Chinese labourers were also employed on rubber smallholdings. Smallholdings were sub-divided into medium holdings (25-100 acres), and "true" smallholdings (below 2 acres).

Table 43

Federated Malay States Estate Labour Force, Years Ending 1907-1938.

Year	Indians	Chinese	Javanese	Others	No. of Estates
1907	43,824	5,348	6,029	2,872	287
1908	43,515	6,595	4,999	1,961	300
1909	55,732	12,402	6,170	2,778	na
1910	na	na	na	na	na
1911	109,633	31,460	12,795	8,496	711
1912	na	na	na	na	na
1913	142,476	25,081	12,197	8,496	na
1914	120,144	24,000	10,115	7,120	na
1915	126,347	27,446	8,356	8,592	719
1916	138,295	42,831	7,485	7,496	797
1917	148,834	55,240	7,746	8,902	920
1918	139,480	46,372	8,249	7,821	1,003
1919	160,658	61,089	7,861	7,492	1,087
1920	160,966	40,866	8,918	5,808	1,105
1921	121,644	25,712	5,732	3,353	1,001
1922	122,589	27,575	4,906	3,724	1,052
1923	121,463	31,957	4,791	4,791	1,204
1924	119,242	30,884	4,516	4,715	1,068
1925	137,761	37,879	4,165	4,549	1,206
1926	176,114	61,064	4,760	4,822	1,403
1927	172,466	44,239	4,550	3,963	1,421
1928	162,460	50,647	5,149	4,788	1,509
1929	181,205	65,617	5,316	6,642	1,651
1930	132,745	30,860	3,665	2,411	1,757
1931	104,767	32,916	2,464	2,357	1,800
1932	90,003	31,349	1,920	2,328	1,912
1933	96,138	35,188	2,207	3,318	2,030
1934	119,443	40,305	2,521	4,153	2,178
1935	118,591	29,950	1,941	2,658	2,345
1936	123,595	30,760	1,924	2,979	2,419
1937	155,725	37,200	2,371	3,823	2,519
1938	137,353	28,925	1,762	2,892	2,388

Source: Parmer, *Colonial Labour Policy*, Table 4 Appendices, p.273.

Emigration, usually back to China, provided a second avenue for displaced tin mining labourers. This was first noticed on a significant scale from 1914 when declining tin prices culminating in the financial and market uncertainties that accompanied the outbreak of war, caused many Chinese to return to their homeland. Chinese departures from the FMS exceeded arrivals by 18,000 in 1914 and 16,000 in 1915. The bulk of the Chinese emigrating during this period did so at their own expense, but from August 1914 a system of repatriation at government expense was introduced for some Chinese labourers. Initially this government-funded repatriation was confined to persons regarded as decrepit but from late October 1914

the offer was extended to all Chinese unable to find work. By the end of the year, following a revival in the tin market that was stimulated by war demands, the number of Chinese applying for repatriation had declined considerably. By March 1915 the system had been abandoned.

Emigration on a significant scale also occurred during the 1930s. During this period the government again turned to the funded repatriation of unemployed Chinese labourers.[5] At the beginning of 1930, 167,903 Chinese left the country including some 13,000 repatriated at government expense. In 1932 the migrational deficit had increased to 500,000. In the period 1930-1932 more than 50,494 Chinese from the FMS were repatriated at government expense. Of these 33,000 were from Perak.[6] By mid-1932 the total cost of Chinese repatriation to the Malayan government exceeded $1 million. With a view to meeting the whole cost of any further repatriation the 1933 Aliens' Ordinance provided for a fund created by fees charged to applicants for certificates of admission. From 1934 the fund was used to pay the cost of such additional repatriation of Chinese as occurred.[7] Again, the government's initial intention was to repatriate only those Chinese labourers considered destitute (for which a certificate of such condition was required from a government-appointed medical officer). However, between August and November 1931 and May and July 1932 this policy was abandoned and repatriation was unrestricted.[8]

A third avenue open to unemployed mine workers, particularly those who possessed artisan skills, was to move into urban areas. Unskilled labourers could also resort to hawking,

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[5] In September and October 1930 the colonial government undertook an investigation into the extent of unemployment in the Straits Settlements and Malay States. During this investigation the Straits Settlements Government reported that many businesses had closed resulting in massive unemployment. Moreover, Singapore had been invaded by an influx of unemployed labourers from the interior Malay States. A most alarming discovery regarding the level of employment was the spreading of available work through part-time employment and job rotation. With this development it was feared that any slight worsening of economic conditions would make unemployment a very much larger problem. Overall, therefore, the most desirable measure was to reduce total population by placing restrictions on immigration and by encouraging emigration through government-funded repatriation.

[6] At least another 25,000 Chinese were repatriated from the Straits Settlements. See Parmer, *Colonial Labour Policy*, Table 3, p.272.

[7] *Ibid.*, p.243.

[8] During the first period the decision to abandon restricted repatriation was made because of the expected increase in Chinese unemployment which was likely to be created as a result of an error made in scheduling production for Malaya's quota under the First International Tin Restriction Agreement. Precautions were taken for the worst possible developments and in Perak troops were mobilised into important strategic positions in the Kinta Valley.

pulling a rickshaw, domestic service or working in shops or restaurants.[9] Internal migration was most likely during the Great Depression as many moved into urban areas, particularly to Kuala Lumpur, Penang and Singapore, in search of jobs and other forms of relief. However, although some Chinese tin miners successfully gained employment in urban areas, the majority discovered that conditions were not much improved those on the mines. Consequently, in many towns places, including covered public sidewalks known as "the five footways" filled with unemployed labourers. Measures resorted to by displaced coolies in urban areas in order to provide for themselves included looting for rice and foodstuffs and general crime.[10]

Large numbers of unemployed Chinese in the major urban centres prompted action by the colonial administration.[11] During the 1920-22 slump the chief means for coping with Chinese unemployment was to direct the unemployed to several temporary camps established in Perak, Selangor and Negri Sembilan. The running costs of these camps was shared in approximately equal proportions between private Chinese charities (especially guilds), wealthy mine owners and the FMS government.[12] However, two of the mining camps were closed in 1922 and the third, in Perak, was closed in 1923. Labourers remaining in the camps were temporarily transferred to a government "Federal Decrepit Asylum" established at Port Swettenham in Selangor. From these camps the Chinese labourers were engaged for such public works employment as was available or repatriated to China, mostly at their own expense.

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[9] Since hawking required as little as $2 in initial capital, many unemployed coolies turned to this particular form of self-employment. In Perak a significant increase in illegal hawking activities was noted in official reports. In many areas, however, attempts were made by local authorities to suppress hawking on the grounds that the business was "unhygienic, causing obstruction to traffic and fostering bribery". *Monthly Review of Chinese Affairs*, No.32, April 1933, File No. 13008, Pt.III in CO 273/585; Khoo, "The Great Depression", p.83.

[10] In the latter case, Perak police records report a dramatic increase in the incidence of murder, robbery, housebreaking, theft and the use of counterfeit coins in the period 1930-1932. These types of criminal activity were almost double that of the previous five years. Loh, *Beyond the Tin Mines*, p.28; *Monthly Review of Chinese Affairs*, No.5, May 1931, File No.82398 in CO 273/81.

[11] The Secretary of Chinese Affairs observed in 1923 that "...The establishment of some such home for aged immigrant labourers who have spent their lives and energy working for this country, has been becoming more and more of a necessity. Immigrants who came here as boys and have spent their lives in toil, but through illness or misfortune have not succeeded in making themselves independent are now past the age when they can any longer support themselves; and as their long absence from their native places has cut them off from their families, some provision has become inevitable". FMS Secretary for Chinese Affairs, *Annual Report, 1923*, p.3, cited in Parmer, *Colonial Labour Policy*, pp.228-229.

[12] Straits Settlements, *Proceedings of the Legislative Council 1922*, p.B71, cited in *ibid.*, p.228.

During the Great Depression the government was also urged to advance public works schedules for 1931 and 1932 in order to absorb unemployed labourers. Public works were much preferred to "rest camps" and costly repatriation.[13] In the Straits Settlements the government concluded that its policy would be to provide work on current government projects for as many able-bodied Chinese as possible and to initiate new works in order to absorb more unemployed labourers. In the FMS some special relief work on public works programs was initiated in Ipoh and the government reported that in 1931 an average 1,000 Chinese were employed per month.[14] As unemployment worsened in the mining areas toward the end of 1938, the government met the situation with expanded relief works. In February 1939 approximately 10,000 mine labourers were given employment in Perak. A system of registration for the unemployed was also initiated and by May 1939 nearly 28,000 labourers had been registered although the amount of relief work had increased very little. Except for 753 Malays and 663 Indians, all the registrants were Chinese.[15] In addition to relief work the FMS government also specifically endorsed the maintenance of relief camps for unemployed Chinese. However, in contrast to its facilities for dealing with Indian labourers, the government lacked organisations such as the Indian Immigration Committee and the Agent of the Government of India through which to keep informed of Chinese unemployment.[16] Therefore in June 1930 the FMS government announced the formation of the Kinta Unemployment Relief Committee which was charged with dealing with the problem of unemployment among Chinese mine workers. The Committee's function was to advise officers of the Chinese Protectorate of actual and threatened unemployment in Perak. It also found work for some labourers and at its peak provided jobs for a total of 2,097 workers. But by the end of 1931,

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[13] The High Commissioner declared that employment on "undertakings beneficial to the country" was obviously better than "ineffective expenditure on repatriation, doles and relief camps". FMS, *Proceedings of the Federal Council* 1930, p.B59, cited in Parmer, *Colonial Labour Policy*, p.235.

[14] FMS, *Proceedings of the Federal Council*, 1931, p.C458, *ibid.*, p.241

[15] The High Commissioner reported that $2.4 million had been spent on relief work for the unemployed, mainly Chinese, during 1939. Chinese Affairs Department, Federation of Malaya, cited in *ibid.*, pp.246-247.

only one and a half years after its formation, the Committee was rendered inactive through lack of funds.[17] Other efforts coordinated by the Perak Chinese Chamber of Commerce provided free meals, housing materials and clothes to a few thousand destitute Chinese labourers.[18] In Selangor a relief camp for unemployed Chinese was established in July 1930. The running costs of the camp were met by contributions from the Chinese community. However, when the MCP sought to propagandise in the camp in March 1931, it was closed.

Overall, although repatriation, employment in the rubber industry and urban employment (or other forms of relief), accounted for a significant number of displaced tin mining coolies, these avenues could not provide for the tens of thousands of labourers in search of alternative means of livelihood. In the rubber industry, for example, Indian labourers continued to predominate the labour force, particularly on the estates. Furthermore, areas of rubber production were located some distance from the mines. In Perak, for example, although the rubber industry was of general importance, it was of only minor significance in Kinta; in 1920 of a total area of 339,260 acres under rubber cultivation in Perak only 57,835 acres, including both estates and smallholdings, were located in Kinta. In 1912, 5,177 workers were employed on Perak rubber estates. This number increased to 7,700 by 1920 but by 1921 had fallen to 6,645.[19] What then became of the majority of the unemployed Chinese tin mining labourers?

By far the most popular avenue pursued by erstwhile mine workers was to move into unoccupied lands on the edge of the Malayan jungle and undertake agricultural production, particularly the cultivation of food and later cash crops such as tobacco, groundnuts, and tapioca. As such they contributed significantly to the emergence of agricultural "squatter"

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[16] Government-appointed Chinese advisory boards composed of prominent Chinese had functioned periodically in some states since the turn of the century. In 1931 the Selangor Chinese advisory board was consulted by the government on ways to cope with unemployment.

[17] *Monthly Review of Chinese Affairs, FMS*. No.32, April 1933. File No 13008, Pt.III in CO 273/585.

[18] These initiatives provided relief for a short period while the Chamber's funds lasted. Khoo, "The Great Depression", pp.86-87.

[19] Jackson, *Immigrant Labour*, pp.156-157.

communities from the mid-1910s and particularly from the 1930s.[20] Although Chinese squatters had existed since the arrival of the first Chinese settlers in Malaya, they were generally few in number. During and after the Great Depression, however, their numbers increased significantly. The movement was greatly accelerated during the Japanese Occupation when for many squatting was the only alternative to starvation. In addition to the labourers moving away from moribund mines, the agricultural squatter population was augmented by illegal immigrants and an exodus of town-dwellers into the countryside. By 1945 total squatter numbers were estimated at about 400,000.

Most of the land occupied by Chinese agricultural squatters was done so illegally since the restrictions of a pro-Malay land policy and a laborious administration system made it difficult for the illiterate immigrant community to acquire land legally.[21] Compared to legal acquisition squatting had many additional advantages including the absence of rents and care of land, no restriction on the types of crops grown, lack of governmental procedures, and the freedom to exploit the land until it was exhausted and then move to new pastures. The only danger to squatting appeared to be security, that is of being discovered by the government or by the owners of private land. The chance of this, however, was remote as both governmental and private control was lax either through lack of personnel to enforce eviction or deliberate policy, such as the government's promotion of food production.[22]

The areas opened up by the agricultural squatters generally fell into three categories: virgin forest land, vacant State land reserved for some purpose (for example, Forest Reserves and Malay Reservations), and land already alienated under title by other parties (including land

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[20] Sandhu, "The Saga of the "Squatter" in Malaya", pp.141-179. See also E.H.Dobby, "Resettlement Transforms Malaya: A Case History of Relocating the Population of an Ascitic Plural Society", *Economic Development and Cultural Change*, Vol.1, No.3, 1952, pp.161-179.

[21] In pre-Emergency Malaya all unalienated land was vested in the Malay rulers with land titles in each state were granted only on the authority of the Ruler in Council. Furthermore, much of the land could only be alienated to Malays to thereafter remain in Malay hands. When the Chinese made applications for title over unalienated land their applications were required to go through more than one hundred procedures before final grant of title. Even when the Government frantically sponsored a "Grow More Food" campaign just before the Japanese invasion, applications from hundreds of Chinese squatters requesting land for padi-production were rejected out of hand. See Sandhu, *ibid.*, p.146.

[22] As it will be discussed shortly, this was particularly the case during the late 1920s and 1930s.

alienated for tin mining). A fourth squatter group was often domiciled on the outskirts of existing towns where artisans had settled who had not been able to get far into the country, settled to grow food.[23]

After the Japanese Occupation, as conditions returned to normal and the "machinery of trade was restored", many squatters returned to their original occupations and homes. But a large number who had given up tin mining, rubber tapping or work in the towns, remained on the land. In the post-war period these squatters changed from producing chiefly for subsistence to being commercial farmers. In some states, for example Johor, they became the primary source of commodities such as eggs and pork, not only for their own areas but also for export. They also formed a reservoir of casual tin mining labour. More importantly, however, these agriculturalists constituted the "squatter problem" in the post-war era as the returning British administration sought to re-establish law and order throughout the country generally, and to reassert their administrative authority over land matters specifically.

II. AGRICULTURAL SQUATTER COMMUNITIES IN KINTA- A CASE STUDY:

As the primary tin-producing area, a case study can be made of the development of Chinese agricultural squatter communities in the Kinta Valley.[24] The history of these communities prior to Emergency can be divided into four distinct periods: (i) the late 19th century to mid-1910; (ii) mid-1910 to late 1920; (iii) late 1920 to the outbreak of the Second World War; and, (iv) the post-war period to 1948. These periods are characterised not only by changing socio-economic factors that affected the tin mining industry, but also by varying government attitudes towards the agriculturalists. The overall effect was an increase in the

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[23] Squatters in the first category lived in wooden housing and a few acres they themselves had cleared. These were the true "pioneer squatters" who grew vegetables and short-term crops. These squatters only occasionally cultivated rice, instead depending for carbohydrates on tapioca, yams, and sweet potatoes or, in the post-war period, on the purchase of rice. This group consumed much of their own produce but gradually sent out vegetables, chickens and pigs for sale in urban markets. In the third category, the squatters began by supplying their own food needs but, in the post-war years, quickly transformed themselves into a group of wage-workers living in makeshift quarters on an illegally-held patch of ground. In the fourth group the squatters originally farmed for themselves and later sold their produce to other townspeople, thus forming a new market-gardening belt on the outskirts of urban settlement. Dobby, "Resettlement Transforms Malaya", pp.165-66.

[24] Kinta is also the area for which the most information is available. The following is based on Loh, *Beyond the Tin Mines*, pp.1-102.

number of squatter communities in the Kinta District and the consolidation of cash-cropping as an integral part of the Kinta economy.

The Emergence of Chinese Agricultural Squatters in Kinta, 1880-1910

Chinese market gardening activities in the vicinity of the Kinta District mining centres were reported from the late 1880s.[25] Some years later, after the 1898 Land Code had been gazetted, further mention was made of market gardeners in reference to the number of "annual licences" issued for particular years.[26] However, prior to 1910 the number of squatters involved were relatively insignificant and the land occupied accounted for only a small percentage of total Kinta land.[27] Basically an appendage to the mining industry, in that the gardeners provided foodstuffs to the mining population, the attitude of the colonial government *vis-a-vis* these small groups of gardeners was thus one of tolerance and benevolent neglect.

From Tin Miners to Agricultural Squatters, 1910-1929

The situation of the Chinese agricultural squatter communities altered considerably in the mid-1910s. Firstly, increasing numbers of market gardeners were being "discovered" in the villages of Ampang, Jelapang, Tanjong Tualang and Sungei Siput.[28] Secondly, because of the demand for tin mining land, many miners had begun to appeal to the Kinta Land Office for assistance in clearing gardeners from their lands. Finally, there was increasing reference in

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[25] In 1889 the District Officer noted that market gardeners cultivated and supplied fresh vegetables, meat and other food crops to the mining communities. *Annual Report 1889*, cited in Loh, *Beyond the Tin Mines*, p.20.

[26] In 1904 it was reported that of the 952 annual licences issued, 471 were for agricultural purposes, both vegetable gardening and *ladang* (farm) cultivation. Between 1905 and 1911 comments were also made in the Kinta Land Office Annual Reports of difficulties in trying to collect annual licence fees. On some occasions attempts to collect fees resulted in "disturbances" which were quickly resolved when the government threatened the gardeners with eviction and/or demolition of their homes. In addition there were also infrequent reports of the "unsanitary and crowded" conditions under which market gardeners, rickshaw coolies, and hawkers lived. *Annual Report Kinta Land Office 1904*, p.4; *1905*, p.2; *1906*, p.2; *1907*, p.2; *1911*, p.2; *Perak Government Gazette 1890*, p.190 cited in *ibid.*, pp.20-21.

[27] In 1904 annual licences for market gardeners were issued for 500 acres compared to the 90,000 acres alienated for mining purposes. In terms of state revenue the funds that could be raised by way of annual licences compared most unfavourably to those collected from the tin industry and the revenue-farms.

[28] In 1912 it was estimated that there were over 5,000 market gardeners, mostly Chinese, in the Ulu Kinta *mukim* alone. FMS, *Annual Report Ipoh Land Office 1912*, p.1; *Annual Report Kinta Land Office 1913*, p.1; *1915*, p.3, cited in Loh, *Beyond the Tin Mines*, p.22.

official circles to groups of agricultural 'squatters", that is gardeners who occupied land either without any form of legal document or with only a Temporary Occupation License (TOL), not a permanent title. These gardeners were usually served with a summons and subsequently fined.[29] As shown in Table 44 below the expansion in the number of market gardeners coincided with the beginning of large-scale unemployment from the Perak mines in about 1914.

Table 44

Tin Production and Employment in Perak, 1910-1941.

Year	Production (pikuls)	Employment	Year	Production (pikuls)	Employment
1910	421,344	91,165	1927	609,840	77,418
1911	437,338	107,864	1928	689,976	68,499
1912	477,238	118,409	1929	749,918	65,411
1913	493,970	126,361	1930	700,510	50,876
1914	497,758	96,740	1931	572,645	33,486
1915	466,637	94,865	1932	289,834	23,736
1916	457,666	82,534	1933	252,554	23,042
1917	414,002	68,521	1934	374,186	31,550
1918	386,131	78,621	1935	420,790	32,596
1919	386,071	64,760	1936	655,838	44,284
1920	368,105	50,622	1937	753,900	47,530
1921	352,414	47,117	1938	419,294	30,641
1922	366,408	45,726	1939	444,461	41,636
1923	415,162	61,655	1940	822,629	52,606
1924	500,119	63,794	1941[a]	614,695	47,514
1925	516,583	68,000			
1926	515,794	70,287			

Source: FMS, *Annual Report Mines Department*, various years; FMS, *Annual Report FMS Chamber of Mines*, various years, cited in Loh, *Beyond the Tin Mines*, Table 1.1, p.11.

Notes: [a] January-September only.

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[29] At a conference of Perak District Officers held in February 1927 the term "squatter" was defined to include three forms of land occupation, viz. (a) illegal occupation, that is without any form of title or license whatsoever; (b) legal occupation of state land; and (c) legal occupation of land alienated for mining. The term "legal" for cases (b) and (c) implied possession of a licence. According to this definition there existed both legal and illegal squatters. Though formally distinguishable in effect both types were subjected to much insecurity for the legal squatters only held licences of a temporary nature.

As the name suggests, a TOL was a licence that had to be renewed annually. Where the plot of land involved was less than ten acres (which was usually the case for market gardens), the application process required registration with the District Office. In mid-1910 the annual fee charged was only $2 per annum if the land was outside town limits. In theory TOLs were renewable if the licensees were "satisfactory tenants", that is if they maintained their plots, planted approved crops and, in some instances, erected a home on the land. TOLs were also, in theory, convertible into a title under the *Mukim Register*. In practice, TOLs were in fact withdrawn as often as they were renewed.[30] Why then did market gardeners not seek a less precarious form of document than the TOL? Moreover, why did the number of market gardeners with TOLs continue to grow during the next two decades? Commenting on these questions in 1912 the Assistant District officer of the Kinta Land Office suggested the following three reasons: (i) the difficulty of obtaining land; (ii) ignorance of the procedures involved; and (iii) the small risk of eviction and freedom of control. However, although these reasons were probably relevant to some extent in 1912, by the mid-1910 as increasing numbers of squatters were being summoned and then fined in court for illegal occupation of land, it was evident that the gardeners were certainly aware of the procedures involved. Similarly, as the Kinta Land Office developed a "rent roll" of TOL holders and devised a new collection scheme, the risk of discovery and eviction became obvious.[31]

In the absence of ignorance about procedures and the small risk of eviction there appears to have been three major reasons why squatter numbers, including those holding TOLs, increased from the mid-1910s. Firstly, there was great difficulty for displaced mine labourers to obtain land in Kinta because of the policy which stated that land could not be

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[30] As it will be discussed shortly this was particularly the case in the mid-1920s and mid-1930s. For the Chinese in the Kinta district, TOLs were seldom converted into titles through the *Mukim Register* which generally was only used to register land held by Malays. Kratoska, "The Peripatetic Peasant", pp.31-35.

[31] The new scheme was first experimented by the Ipoh Land Office in 1911 and then implemented for the rest of the District in 1913. In 1916 it was recorded that "all squatter homes and gardens are on a rent roll so that [squatters] know that they have to pay and know how much to pay". FMS, *Annual Report Ipoh Land Office 1911*; *Annual Report Kinta Land Office 1913*, p.1; *1916*, pp.3-4 cited in Loh, *Beyond the Tin Mines*, p.21.

alienated for agricultural purposes if it had any mining potential. Even when the land was available preference was given to Perak Malays rather than the Chinese because the Malay rulers did not want the Chinese to become permanent settlers.[32] Secondly, the application process for permanent title centred on the cumbersome and expensive Torrens System. Under this system an application first went through the Land Office which determined whether or not the land was available for alienation. In Kinta, the Mines Department was also consulted. Subsequently, the Survey Department demarcated the area applied for with boundary stones. All these matters were coordinated at the level of the State Secretariat. Although the title finally obtained provided security (in that the leases could be for as long as 60 years), the expenses involved were quite considerable. Moreover, these expenses had to be settled prior to the issue of the lease. On the whole, considering the cumbersome and expensive processes involved, it is not surprising that the low income market gardener resorted to squatting, with or without a TOL.[33] Finally, given the priorities of the government *vis-a-vis* the use of land in Kinta, the TOL was an extremely useful document that could be employed for issuing land for short-term purposes, such as during a period of slump when labour unrest threatened or during a period of food shortages. This strategy was used increasingly in the early 1920s and 1930s. In this sense the increase in the number of squatters using TOLs were also fostered by government policy.

In contrast to the lack of official attention given to Kinta Chinese agriculturalists prior to the mid-1910s, the government began to encourage food production and, inadvertently from 1916, to consider the problems of the area's agricultural squatters. This change in policy was promoted by a series of related but unexpected developments, most importantly the outbreak of the First World War, a prolonged food shortage between 1917 and 1920 and the economic

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[32] Many Chinese applications for land were rejected on these two grounds. Although this policy was clearly stated in 1924 it was being generally applied in the pre-1920 period. FMS, *Annual Report Perak 1924*, p.6; *1927*, p.2; *1928*, p.2 cited in Loh, *Beyond the Tin Mines*, p.22

[33] In the mid-1910s, apart from the annual rent of $1-$3 per acre (depending on whether the land was first-, second-, or third-class land), the applicant also had to pay survey fees (averaging about $41 for areas less than 5 acres in size), the cost of boundary stones, the certificate and a premium of $5 per acre. Kratoska, "The Peripatetic Peasant" pp.24-30.

slump of 1920-1922. There is little evidence to suggest that the structural changes to the local mining economy directly influenced government policy. Nevertheless, the official promotion of food production at this time provided a welcome opportunity for both newly arrived immigrants and coolies displaced from the mining industry to seek an alternative livelihood. Thus government policies, together with changes in the mining industry and continued immigration, resulted in the emergence of additional and larger Chinese agricultural squatter communities throughout Kinta.

Prior to 1914 Malaya produced approximately one-third of all its rice requirements and imported the remainder, primarily from Thailand and Burma.[34] But with the outbreak of War shipping shortages created difficulties in obtaining rice and other foodstuffs.[35] Consequently, the government began to encourage food-crop production. In mid-1917 a Food Production Committee was formed and, after a series of meetings, a programme was launched to boost local rice and vegetable production. In 1918 the Food Production Enactment was passed in the Federal Council. To increase *padi* production, selected seeds, advances, and a guaranteed minimum price were provided. An irrigation scheme was also initiated in Lower Perak and a government rice mill was built in Krian. Restrictions on the growing of hill *padi* were also lifted and where land was no longer suitable for *padi* growing the "special *bendang* (wet rice) conditions" were removed to allow food crop cultivation.

Of even greater interest was the promotion of other crops including tapioca which had been previously prohibited. All landholdings, whether held on annual licences or permanent title, used exclusively for the growing of vegetables, bananas and pineapples, were also given "rent holidays" for five years and charged only $1 per annum per acre thereafter. By 1920 free

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[34] For details see Cheng Siok Hwa, "The Rice Industry of Malaya: A Historical Survey", *Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, Vol.42, No.2, June 1969, pp.130-144; Kratoska, "Rice Cultivation and the Ethnic Division of Labour in British Malaya," pp.280-314; Lim Teck Ghee, *Peasants and Their Agricultural Economy*, pp.120-138.

[35] This was noted by the Chief Secretary in an address to Residents as early as December 1916. By May 1917 the High Commissioner had further noted the "inevitable restrictions on the importation of foodstuffs due to the demands of the war and to the progressive decrease in the amount of shipping that was available". He suggested that it was the duty of all to observe the strictest economy, not only in the supplies imported from other countries, but in all foodstuffs. It was also the duty of all to increase local food supplies by growing rice, vegetables and other economic crops. Quoted in Loh, *Beyond the Tin Mines* p.23.

TOLs had been issued for an area covering 4,493 acres, mostly on alienated mining land.[36] A second ruling required all landowners with more than 30 acres to cultivate foodstuffs within an area equal to 3 per cent of agricultural land or 5 per cent of mining land. A landowner with more than ten labourers was required to cultivate 10 per cent of the land if it was greater than either of these categories. The foodstuffs cultivated included *ragi* (a staple food grain used as yeast, popular with South Indians), *padi* or sweet potatoes. Furthermore, those landowners cultivating above the required average were given bonuses of $5 per acre plus a rent rebate for the total area planted with food crops. All other former planting restrictions were lifted for five years and squatters were granted TOLs to plant vegetables and other food crops on abandoned mining land.

The establishment of "food growing reserves" for cultivating fruit and vegetables outside major towns was also promoted.[37] Although these reserves were not created until 1921 an interim policy was adopted that stated that no further licences should be issued for planting rubber on mining or *kampong* land or on land that had been given out for vegetable planting. Other recommendations provided for the cultivation of food crops on rice lands between the *padi* planting seasons, along river banks, and on railway reserves. Throughout these years various seeds (*padi*, *ragi*, Italian and Bulrush millet, sorghum and maize), were distributed as were root crops (sweet potato cuttings and yams) and pulses (green and black gram, Java beans and *dhal*). Publications on the planting of various tropical and European vegetables, *ragi*, and dry land *padi* were also issued and posters in vernacular languages were widely disseminated among estate and mining labourers informing them of the benefits of planting food.

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[36] In addition, and contrary to past practice, TOLs were issued for large areas (over 100 acres) to estate and mine owners and also to other groups of people against a statutory declaration that the licences were meant for planting foodstuffs. In these cases surveying and even inspection by Land Office officials was abandoned.

[37] To this end the Chief Secretary Sir E.L.Brockman ordered all Residents to make "definite recommendations as [to] suitable areas" for food growing reserves but with the understanding that "these reserves would not be gazetted under the Land Enactment". In Kinta some 383 acres of land in thirteen different parts of the District were suggested Chief Secretary, FMS, to British Residents, 24 October 1917, Encl.1; and Selangor Resident to Commissioner of Land Revenue and all District Officers, 11 December 1917, Encl.3; both in Sel. Sec. 4263/1917; and Kinta Land Office 139/1920: *Reservation of Lands Near Towns for the Production of Vegetables and Fruits*, cited in Loh, *Beyond the Tin Mines*, p.24.

Food shortages worsened in 1919 despite the end war. Because of an influenza epidemic during the harvest season, the 1918-19 rice crop was below expectations. Moreover, not only had the price of Siamese rice increased owing to unusually high demands by Japan, Java and other countries, but owing to famine conditions in India the monthly supplies from Burma were reduced from 13,000 tons to 7,000 tons. With the extra demand that these altered circumstances threw upon Siam and Vietnam, Malaya suddenly faced the possibility of having an insufficient supply of rice at any price before the end of 1919. Though rice became available from Burma the following year, the Bangkok Government banned exports in 1920 due to the failure of the 1919 rice crop. Fortunately, however, food production in Malaya had begun to increase.[38] Nevertheless, the authorities continued to promote food production for several more years. This was largely because low wages and unemployment during the slump in late 1920 promoted labour unrest.[39] In places such as Tambun, Papan and Tronoh in Kinta, mining activities almost ceased completely. From 78,621 workers in 1918, the total number employed on Perak tin mines decreased to 45,726 by 1922 (Table 44). These retrenched workers swelled the ranks of the unemployed. The colonial government, concerned about widespread labour unrest, worked to stabilise the price of tin. It also encouraged the tin miners unemployed to engage in the cultivation of food crops by issuing free TOLs under the 1918 Food Production Enactment. Despite opposition from the Warden of Mines, "food reserves" amounting to 135 acres were also designated in various parts of the district. However, as these reserves were gazetted as "public areas" under the Land Code in June 1921, the market gardeners were issued TOLs in lieu of land titles. Besides these "food reserves" the

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[38] In Perak wet rice cultivation rose from 73,828 acres in 1917-18 to 82,608 acres in 1919-20 while dry rice production increased from 7,828 acres to 40,912 acres. Tapioca production also increased over the same period. In the Kinta District alone, 3,316 acres of estate land and approximately 6,000 acres of mining land were reportedly planted with *padi*, *ragi*, sweet potatoes and other mixed crops in 1919. These figures did not include Chinese vegetable gardens and smallholdings cultivated with foodstuffs, the areas of which were reportedly difficult to ascertain. According to an estimate by a railway official in 1919 as much as 328 piculs of vegetables were being exported by rail out of four points in Kinta over a six-day period alone. Loh, *Beyond the Tin Mines*, p.25

[39] Between 1921 and 1922 the anarchist movement was particularly active in the urban areas of Kinta. Apart from this there also occurred an increase in gang robberies and serious thefts between 1919 and 1921. See A.M.Goodman, "Anarchism Among the Chinese in British Malaya", 26 January 1925, in Agricultural Secretary for Chinese Affairs, FMS, to Under-Secretary to Government, FMS, 5 February, 1925, Encl.2 in File No. 27708 in CO 717/4, cited in Loh, *Beyond the Tin Mines*, p.25; "Malayan Bulletin of Political Intelligence", No.1, March 1922 and No.2, April, 1922, both in CO 273/516; Blythe, *Chinese Secret Societies*, p.310.

unemployed also began to cultivate disused mining land for which TOLs were similarly issued.[40] There was even a provision for unemployed coolies to plant vegetables on land alienated for Malays to grow fruit trees, pending the maturity of the trees.[41] As a result, the number of Chinese agriculturalists increased considerably. In 1921 it was estimated that there were already 13,000 Chinese market gardeners in Perak.[42] Many Chinese squatters returned to the mines in 1923 when the tin price began to rise. Yet by 1927 it was estimated that as many as 4,000 houses were occupied by Chinese vegetable gardeners farming some 5,000 acres of state land and land alienated for mining in the Ulu Kinta *mukim*. These houses were concentrated around Chemor and in the areas lying between Chemor and Tanjong Rambutan.[43] In 1929 the Chinese Sub-Inspector of Agriculture in Kinta reported the "discovery" of 100 acres of vegetable gardens, each between one and four acres in size, along the Degong-Kampar Road. Other market gardens were also located around Batu Gajah on previously dredged areas belonging to mining companies, and in Kampong Pulai whose 10 pikuls of fresh vegetables per day were distributed to Ipoh, Gopeng and Kampar. The Sub-Inspector also noted that many of the residents in these communities were full-time farmers although a few also worked as casual labourers on the mines. Moreover, most had occupied the land for years and, in some cases, had built substantial houses and planted permanent fruit trees.[44] A sense of permanency had therefore been established.

The fact that many Chinese gardeners were only holding TOLs was bemoaned by some officials and it was recommended that the areas be reserved for between fifteen and twenty years for vegetable farmers. However, the establishment of such reserves in Kinta was

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[40] See F.Birkinshaw, "Reclaiming Old Mining Land for Agriculture", *Mining Agricultural Journal*, 1931, pp.470-476.

[41] Kinta Land Office File 16/1921; 139/1920; FMS, *Federal Council Proceedings*, 21 November 1922, pp.B 66-67, cited in Loh, *ibid.*, p.26.

[42] *Census of British Malaya, 1921*, p.115 cited in *ibid.*, p. 26. Assuming that some of these gardeners had families it is possible that the total population of the agricultural squatter communities could have been in the region of 20,000-30,000 people.

[43] Assistant District Officer Ipoh to District Officer Kinta, 7 May 1927, Encl. 1 in 747/1927; *Chinese Vegetable Gardens in Ulu Kinta*, cited in *ibid.*, p.26.

[44] Chinese Sub-Inspector of Agriculture Perak to Agriculture Field Officer, Perak South, 19 May 1929 and 2 April 1929 in Kinta Land Office File 659/1929, *Chinese Vegetable Gardens in Kinta*, cited in Loh, *ibid.*, p.26

generally considered a low priority by the British administration. With the reopening of mines in late 1922 and the withdrawal of the Food Production Enactment on 1 June 1923, TOLs were not renewed despite the fact that in many cases the squatters were probably "satisfactory tenants". This was especially true of those squatters on tin mining land. Simultaneously, Food Production Reserves, only recently established, were revoked. In 1924 the British Resident categorically stated that, "...the policy was definitely adopted that land administration in Kinta must be conducted primarily in the interests of tin mining and applications for permanent agricultural titles are to be given the most careful considerations [sic.]...". In 1927 and 1928 it was further clarified that, "...agricultural land is...so scarce in Kinta that applications for smallholdings have to be scrutinised much more carefully than in the districts where it is abundant. Perak Malays are given prior consideration but even they have to be strictly rationed."[45] The TOL therefore proved to be a most appropriate legal document, easily issued when needed and just as easily withdrawn when old priorities once again prevailed. Fortunately the period 1923-1927 was a boom period for the tin mining industry and mines not only reopened but re-employed many workers. The numbers employed in the mines increased from 45,726 in 1922 to 77,418 in 1927 (Table 44).

Cash-cropping and the Consolidation of Agricultural Squatter Communities in the 1930s:

The third phase in the development of agricultural squatter communities in Kinta was directly related to the world economic depression of the early 1930s. Between December 1929 and August 1932 the Perak mining force declined from 65,411 to 21,839, barely a third of its size just three years before. If the August 1932 figure is compared to that of December 1927 then 55,529 workers were actually retrenched over a period of only five years (Table 44). In order to avert labour unrest and to provide an alternative means of livelihood for the

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[45] FMS, *Annual Report Perak, 1927*, p.2 and *1928*, p.2 quoted in Loh, *Beyond the Tin Mines*, p.27.

unemployed, the government again turned to the promotion of food production and Temporary Food Production Reserves were established.[46] The cultivation of food crops (including *padi*) by Chinese in old tin mining areas was again recommended by the Department of Agriculture, particularly in Batang Padang. In other areas such as Tapah the cultivation of food crops along river banks was also approved. In 1931 more than 8,200 TOLs were issued in the Ulu Kinta Mukim, 80 per cent of which were for vegetable growing.[47] By 1933 there was an estimated 17,000 TOLs in the district, the majority of which were for agricultural purposes. As shown in Table 45 below, by far the largest number of TOLs were issued for cultivation on mining land.

Table 45

Numbers of Types of TOLs Issued for the Kinta District, 1933.
(Figures are given in the nearest thousand)

Over State Land	Approx. No. of TOLs
Within Towns and Villages	1,400
Within Malay Reservations(MRs)	50
Outside Town, Villages and MRs	4,000
Over Mining Land	11,550
Total	17,000

Source: Agricultural District Officer Kinta to Secretary to Resident Perak, 5 January 1934, Encl. 19 in Kinta Land Office Files No.095/1933 *Statement of TOLs Issued Over: a) Mining land, b) Agricultural and Other Land; Federal Council Proceedings, FMS*, 13 September 1932, p.88), cited in Loh, *Beyond the Tin Mines*, Table 1.5, p.29.

The bulk of the squatter community was comprised of displaced tin mining coolies with families. A number of observations account for this. In the first instance, as the demographic pattern among the Perak Chinese was transformed following the influx of Chinese women during the late 1920s, the number of families in the Kinta district increased.

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[46] Memorandum by A.B.Jordan dated 7 June 1930, Encl. 2 in High Commissioner, FMS, to Lord Passfield, Colonial Office, 8 July 1930 in CO 273/566; Kinta Land Office 795/1930: *Question of Making Available More Land for Vegetable Gardening and Squatters*, cited in Loh, *Beyond the Tin Mines*, p.29.

[47] In all these instances TOLs were liberally issued and fees were not collected for plots of less than one acre. Requests for reduced TOL fees were also generally approved.

Since families with children were consderably less mobile (leading to a degree of permanent settlement), and considering that well-paid jobs in the urban centres were scarce, it made sense for unemployed coolies with families to turn to farming. Also, as many Chinese immigrants to Malaya came from farming backgrounds many coolies' wives had been growing vegetables continuously since the early 1920s (or even before), while their husbands worked in the mines.[48] This, combined with the relative access to land and TOLs during the depression years, made farming an obvious alternative; food was ensured, shelter could be easily constructed, and the family that was a burden in urban areas during slump conditions could be used to advantage for intensive cultivation in market gardens, especially if the children were adolescents.

Secondly, though demanding much hard work, market gardening did not require large initial capital. A few agricultural implements such as the *changkol* and watering can were all that were necessary. Seeds and pulses were made available by the Department of Agriculture and were readily obtained. Furthermore, since most vegetables such as brinjal (egg plant), spinach, onions and mustard leaves took only about thirty days to mature, and others such as long beans, okra, cucumber and various kinds of gourds forty days, the farmer achieved relatively rapid returns to labour when selling the surplus at local markets. Moreover, once the farmer had accumulated enough capital it was usually possible to supplement agricultural income by rearing livestock (usually poultry and pigs) and fish (in the nearby disused mining pools).[49] Moreover, the marketing of these perishables posed little problem since a comprehensive transportation system was already in existence in Kinta. Most mines, including those isolated ones, were often served by at least dirt tracks while many mining towns were

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[48] As early as 1916 the District Officer of Kinta noted that the "Chinese squatter population was a community of married agricultural workers". *Annual Report Kinta Land Office 1916*, p.14 cited in Loh, *Beyond the Tin Mines*, p.30.

[49] Rearing livestock complemented market gardening activities since pig and poultry manure could be used as fertiliser for vegetables. Another particular aspect of market gardening was the cultivation of *derris* (tuba), principally on disused mining land, for use as a pesticide. Tuba cultivation became so important with the development of market gardening that large areas of tuba were grown illegally. The tuba acreage rose from 361 acres in 1930 to 2,296 acres by 1937. Kinta Land Office 3[illegible]3/1936: *Cultivation of Tuba in Kinta* 907/1936: *Planting of Tuba by Chinese in Sungei Batu Sakai Reserve*, cited in Loh, *ibid.*, p.30.

connected to the rest of the Peninsula by the system of roads and railways. Thus, once the vegetables, fruits, fish and livestock were transported to the mines and towns they could be moved elsewhere quite easily. Food production in Kinta therefore increased rapidly in the early 1930s. In 1930, 49,538 pikuls of vegetables were exported from the state; by 1931 this had increased to 50,429 pikuls.[50] Thereafter, however, exports, like production in general, began to fall. One reason for the decline was low prices but, more importantly, there was a drastic reduction in the number of TOLs issued [51]

Two secondary crops intensively cultivated in the Kinta area during the 1930s were tobacco and groundnuts. Although cash crops rather than food crops, tobacco and groundnut cultivation was also encouraged by the government in an effort to diversify the Kinta economy. This represented a significant departure from past practice. Compared to vegetable gardening, the initial capital outlay required to cultivate these crops was much larger. Accordingly, the authorities provided credit to retrenched mine workers in the Chemor area to assist in the cultivation of tobacco.[52] Similarly, in Sungei Siput, Pusing and Kampar, the authorities encouraged former coolies in the experimental growing of groundnuts. The experiment was so successful that groundnuts began to be processed for cooking oil.[53] A third crop intensively cultivated in Kinta was tapioca.[54] Initially undertaken as a cash crop in conjunction with rubber or in mixed farming rotation with other crops such as tobacco, sugar cane and vegetables (and with tapioca refuse being used for pig feed), tapioca soon became an important crop in its own right. With the government's encouragement the area under tapioca cultivation increased

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[50] *Annual Report Perak 1932*, p.12; *1935*, p.23; *1936*, p.23; *1938*, p.8, all cited in Loh, *Beyond the Tin Mines*, pp.30-31

[51] The reasons behind the reduction in the number of TOLs issued will be discussed subsequently

[52] In 1932, 850 acres of tobacco were reported throughout Perak; by 1933 the tobacco area had grown to 1,600 acres 1,050 of which was in Kinta. *Annual Report Perak 1932*, p.12; *1933*, pp.40 & 51; *1939*, p.15 cited in Loh, *ibid.*, p.31.

[53] By 1932, 600 acres had been planted with groundnuts. By 1933 this had increased to 771 acres. *Annual Report Perak 1932*, p.39; *Annual Report Perak 1933*, p.13 cited in *ibid*, p.31.

[54] Prior to 1934 general government policy had been to discourage tapioca cultivation. In 1927 a ruling had been issued prohibiting the cultivation of more than two crops of tapioca on land alienated for rubber and other crops because, it was contended, tapioca caused soil depletion. Then in 1933 the results of a study showed this belief was unjustified. Agriculturalists attributed soil exhaustion not to the crop itself but to the manner and method of its cultivation. It was found that tapioca grown in rotation with other crops was actually beneficial to the soil because it demanded deeper and more thorough tillage than other crops.

rapidly from the mid-1930s.[55] The majority of tapioca holdings were concentrated in the northern Kinta and Sungei Siput areas and, for the most part, this cultivation was conducted without TOLs on State Land and Forest Reserves. As with groundnuts, a tapioca processing industry also emerged in the area. In 1933 there were reportedly 30 small tapioca mills in Kinta manufacturing tapioca flour and chips for local use as well as for export. In 1937 the industry was earning between $1.5 million and $2 million.

With the expansion in tobacco, groundnut and tapioca production in the 1930s, Kinta emerged as an important cash-crop area. According to the 1931 census the number of Chinese in Perak who listed market gardening as their major occupation was almost 18,000. By 1933, when the number of TOLs issued for Kinta alone reached an unprecedented 17,000, the total number of market gardeners including families was conceivably in the region of 30,000-50,000. With the occurrence of yet another recession in 1938, during which some 17,000 coolies were retrenched from the mines in the Ulu Kinta *mukim* alone, the government once again resolved to encourage foodcrop production with the issue of 11,000 TOLs. Food production was further promoted between 1939 and 1941 and squatter numbers continued to increase. Consequently, squatter communities sprang up all over the Kinta District: in Sungei Trap, Blanja, Tanjung Tualang, Sungei Raia, Teja, Kampar, Bunga Tanjung, Malim Nawar, Kota Baharu; along the Gopeng and Jelapang Roads near Ipoh; and in numerous other "mined-out" areas.

However, despite the fact that these agricultural communities had grown considerably, the Perak authorities remained reluctant to grant farmers security of tenure over the land they cultivated. Several reasons account for this. In the first instance the policy enunciated in the early 1920s stated that no permanent titles should be issued to squatters on mining or potential

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[55] Whereas in 1930 only 930 acres of tapioca holdings had been reported in Perak, by 1935 the figure had almost doubled to 1,748 acres. By 1936 the acreage of tapioca holdings in Perak had increased to 2,835 acres and to 5,233 acres by 1937. By 1940, 11,225 acres of tapioca were recorded. FMS, *Annual Report Perak 1931*, p.35; *1935*, p.23; *1936*, p.23; *1937*, p.28; *1939*, p.16; *1940*, p.17 cited in Loh, *Beyond the Tin Mines*, p.31

mining land anywhere in Kinta.[56] Secondly, in line with the emergence of a general pro-Malay stance in colonial administration policies, it was explained that Chinese squatters could not be given titles as this would encroach upon the Malay peasants' preserve of small-scale agriculture.[57] A third and largely unstated reason for the administration's reluctance to grant security of land tenure centred on the pro-capitalist nature of colonialism in British Malaya.[58] In Kinta this bias was ultimately expressed in the form of the state's support for mining, in particular the European capital-intensive sector, over the interests of the agricultural squatter community which consisted essentially of labourers. The structural tendency of such a bias was to reserve Kinta land for mining purposes.[59] Therefore, the government's reluctance to issue titles to the squatters was not simply one of preserving land for mining but also for capital. The periodic sponsorship of agricultural programmes in times of severe food shortages, economic slumps, and threats of labour unrest were, on the whole, attempts to adjust to changing socio-economic situations that threatened the viability of the colonial economy. At the same time the colonial state actively intervened on behalf of capital by keeping mining land unencumbered and ensuring the availability of wage-labour for reopening the tin mines.[60] Consequently, when tin prices increased between 1934 and 1937, many mines reopened and many TOLs were withdrawn. New TOL applications were also rejected and pressure in the form of fines, summons and evictions, was put upon those agriculturalists found without TOLs. Finally, in

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[56] Although a resolution had been passed at the Third Inter-Departmental Agriculture Conference in 1932 recommending that the government grant permanent titles to squatter farmers producing vegetables, nevertheless when subsequently adopted in Perak the 1920s policy remained predominant. At a meeting of all Perak District Officers in 1933 the resolution was qualified by the ruling that it would not apply to TOLs over land held under mining leases. Because of this qualification the resolution was effectively of no benefit to Kinta squatters. As noted earlier, some 11,500 of the 17,000 farmers who held TOLs in 1933 did so over mining land while another 4,000 held TOLs over State Land with mining potential.

[57] It was with this general aim that the Malay Reservations were expanded in the 1920s and 1930s and the original Malay Reservations Enactment 1913 was amended in 1933 to ensure the exclusion of non-Malays from land traditionally held by Malays. See Lim Teck Ghee, *Peasants and Their Agricultural Economy*, pp.204-216; Paul Kratoska, "Ends that we cannot foresee: Malay Reservations in British Malaya", *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* Vol 14, No 1, 1983, pp 149-168.

[58] Lim Teck Ghee, "British Colonial Administration and the "Ethnic Division" of Labour", pp.22-68.

[59] Malay peasant interests as well Chinese squatter interests were subjected to this overall priority, the creation of Malay Reservations notwithstanding. Of the 463,360 acres in Kinta, only 3 per cent of the land was designated as Malay Reservations. Apart from Forest Reserves, the vast majority of land was alienated to European and Chinese capitalist interests for mining and agricultural purposes. Loh, *Beyond the Tin Mines*, p.36.

[60] In this regard the Resident of Selangor reported, "...there are 50,000-60,000 persons holding TOLs, mostly Chinese [in the FMS]. At least 50 per cent of these should be available for work in the mines and estates as soon as there is a demand for labour at a reasonable wage; the

November 1936, an amendment to the Land Code was made to facilitate the removal of squatters by force and to deny them any form of compensation.[61]

Agricultural Squatter Communities During the Period of Japanese Occupation

The Japanese Occupation and immediate post-war period marked an important watershed in the socio-economic and political history of Kinta. With the Japanese invasion almost every mine was closed, resulting in the sudden and virtual total displacement of workers in the tin mining industry. Following the establishment of Japanese military rule some mines were reopened but the industry was by no means rehabilitated to pre-war levels. This was only achieved in the late 1940s (and then only in the dredging and gravel-pump sectors), upon the return of the British who allocated funds for acquiring new machinery and spare parts. Thus few people were employed in the mines during the four years of Occupation and in the two or three years following Japanese surrender. Instead, the majority of miners were engaged in farming in rural areas.[62] These miners were joined by thousands of other Chinese urban dwellers who fled from Japanese repression, inflation and food shortages in the towns. The result was an unprecedented increase in the number of Chinese agricultural communities.

Throughout the period of Occupation, Chinese agricultural communities were generally appreciated by the Japanese authorities for their contribution in alleviating food shortages.[63] Indeed, the Japanese administration encouraged their expansion by initiating two schemes (which had been planned by the British just before the invasion), to increase food production: the extension of the Sungei Manik irrigation scheme and development of the Changkat Jong

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government should put pressure on these people to quit. We don't want anything like so many vegetable and pig-rearer squatters." Quoted in Khoo "The Great Depression", p.84.

[61] With this amendment a magistrate could issue a warrant to police officers to dispossess and remove anyone unlawfully occupying land. The police officers could, on behalf of the Ruler of the State, take possession of the land together with all the crops being grown on it and all the buildings and other immovable property.

[62] Statistics on the number of mine workers who returned to the land during the Occupation are not available but an approximate indication can be ascertained from Japanese estimates of increases in *padi* acreage from 650 to 1,650 acres (wet *padi*) and from 480 to 4,000 acres (dry *padi*). Loh, *Beyond the Tin Mines*, p.59.

[63] It is pertinent that the Japanese referred to Chinese agricultural communities variously as "cultivators", "settlers" or "colonists" (or "collaborators with bandits" if they were found providing food to the MPAJA), but never as "squatters".

Padi Scheme. Under these schemes a total of 6,000 acres of land was made available to 1,000 Chinese squatter families. In addition, the Japanese initiated a general campaign to encourage food cultivation. Beginning in 1943, State land was periodically released and Forest Reserves converted to food production.[64] In mid-July 1943 a conference was held to discuss the implementation of a "Three Year Food Plan". On this occasion a policy to encourage even more people to move out into the countryside was also announced. Nevertheless, these efforts did not prevent the food situation from deteriorating. Generally this was because the Sungei Manik and Changkat Jong projects had not been not fully implemented.[65] In addition, the short-term *padi* variety introduced from Taiwan into Sungei Manik developed *padi*-blast, a serious rice disease. Being completely dependent on rice imports the Kinta area was severely affected. Shortages led to inflationary prices which resulted in price controls and the introduction of rationing in 1943. At the individual level many Kinta residents changed their staple from rice to tapioca and sweet potatoes which they could easily cultivate themselves. Thus, beginning from 1944, the Japanese administration introduced large-scale resettlement scheme for urban people in rural areas.[66] At this point occupation of State land and Forest Reserves, even when these lands had not yet been released or converted by Japanese authorities, was tolerated and encouraged. Further ignoring the British Land Code the Japanese permitted Chinese settlement on Malay Reservation Land.[67]

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[64] In January 1943 it was announced that several thousand acres of Forest Reserves in the Kinta District had been converted for food production: 720 acres near Sungei Siput, 49 acres near Kampar, 517 acres near Ulu Kuang, and 52 acres in Ulu Chemor. The conversion of a further 1,000 acres in the Kampar area was also under consideration. Later in the year it was recorded that 52 acres in Ulu Chemor had been cleared and was under *padi* cultivation. In Ulu Kuang trees were being cleared on a further 517 acres. Loh, *Beyond the Tin Mines*, p.60

[65] Local *padi* production actually fell during the last two years of the Occupation. This fall in production was caused by neglect to the irrigation schemes which resulted in inadequate water supplies in areas where *padi* crop normally depended on irrigation to reach maturity.

[66] The best known wartime "resettlement colonies" were in Endau (Johor) and Baharu (Negri Sembilan), where large groups of Chinese and European-Catholics were forcibly moved from Singapore. Smaller colonies were created elsewhere, including Perak. Cheah, *Red Star Over Malaya*, pp.37-39.

[67] The largest areas of settlement of Forest Reserve and Malay Reservation land included areas in Grik where Kwongsai Chinese were predominant, approximately 20,000 acres of land in Dindings district which attracted Hockchews; the Changkat Jong, Sungei Tungku Peninsula, Redang Ponggar and Sungei Kroh areas of Lower Perak which attracted Chinese from Telok Anson; and the Forest Reserves where former tin miners as well as urban dwellers could be found. There was also extensive occupation of mining land and some takeover of rubber estates by food cultivators.

By forcing resettlement in rural areas, releasing and converting land and giving tacit approval to voluntary resettlement on Malay and Forest Reserves and on estates and mines, the Japanese helped establish new Chinese agricultural communities throughout the peninsula. Together with the original Malay cultivators and pre-war Chinese agricultural squatter communities, these newly created agricultural communities were responsible for some measure of subsistence for the population. Although rice production was limited and insufficient to meet the needs of the total population, nevertheless the successful cultivation of other food crops averted starvation for a significant proportion of the population.[68]

Despite the end of Occupation and the rehabilitation of the tin mining industry between 1946 and 1950, many former mine workers and their families (as well as former urban dwellers) remained in rural areas. Initial difficulties in the industry's recovery and its later rehabilitation through greater mechanisation meant that employment opportunities in the mines were limited between 1946 and 1948. In Perak whereas in 1940 some 52,606 workers were employed on the mines, only 13, 71 could find work by December 1946. By December 1947 employment had reached 23,425; by the latter half of 1948 it was 27,000. Likewise, employment in urban areas and on estates was limited.[69] Even those workers who returned to the mines often did so alone, leaving their families in the agricultural areas. The primary reason was the continuing food shortage in the country. At the same time, low wages and unemployment encouraged unrest in urban areas.[70] In this context the BMA promoted a

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[68] Between December 1940 and December 1945 the acreage of tapioca, sweet potato, maize, vegetables and *ragi* increased as follows: tapioca from 46,292 to 157,000 acres; sweet potato from 12,366 to 78,318 acres; maize from 8,369 to 17, 968 acres; *ragi* from 181 to 23,410 acres; and vegetables from 25,406 to 35,619 acres. Loh, *Beyond the Tin Mines*, Table 2.2, p.62

[69] In 1947 the number of jobs in Perak factories totalled 7,000 and government departments employed some 10,500 workers. Some mine workers might also have received relief aid from a scheme started by the BMA, but this was discontinued in April 1946 whereupon there resulted a marked increase in hawking and black market activities. It is not inconceivable that some former mine workers were included among these hawkers and black marketeers. Estates provided considerably more employment opportunities from 1946 to 1947, but the majority of these jobs were taken by Indians. Loh, *ibid.*, Tables 2.7 & 2.8, pp 73-74.

[70] In Ipoh, for example, a major demonstration involving 3,000 people took place on 30 September 1946 over food shortages. When the crowd refused to disperse troops opened fire killing 3 people. Following this incident demonstrators and striking workers again took to the streets in Ipoh, Batu Gajah, Kuala Kangsar, Sungei Siput, Taiping, Sitiawan, Lumut and Port Buntar. On these occasions the demonstrators and strikers called for more food and protested against the BMA's decision to stop providing free food rations. Additional demands included more jobs, higher wages, cash payments for the destitute and unemployed and continued exemption from electricity and water rates which were being reintroduced in October. See Loh, *ibid.*, p.77; Cheah, *Red Star over Malaya*, pp.37-39.; Gamba, *Origins of Trade Unionism*, p.22.

campaign to grow more food. A "Short Term Food Committee" was established in December 1945 with the responsibility of promoting food production generally and setting up "government farms" for rice growing specifically. This general policy guided the BMA in its treatment of the agricultural communities between 1945 and 1948.

In their efforts to restore law and order and to revitalise essential industries and services, the British authorities reintroduced many pre-war laws including the Land Code. Consequently, most of the agricultural communities which had emerged during the War were once again regarded as "squatters". With the agricultural settlements thus designated as illegal, pressure was soon brought to bear upon the central authorities by various interest groups against the squatters. The latter included Forest Department officials demanding that squatters be evicted from their reserves so that reafforestation could be conducted. Land Officers also demanded the return of unreserved State land, especially those plots fringing urban areas that were needed for various development and rehabilitation programs. Malay leaders who wanted the government to remove Chinese occupying Malay Reservation land constituted a third pressure group. Finally, the representatives of private companies that had returned to Malaya, including tin mining companies, also requested that the government evict squatters from their land. Despite these pressures the BMA decided not to evict squatters immediately owing to the food shortages. In fact, it succeeded in getting the various government departments and the mining (and estate) interests to grant a two-year reprieve for squatters beginning from March 1946. Thus insofar as squatters were engaged in food production they would be allowed to remain on the land despite their illegal occupation. Nevertheless, measures of control were introduced.

In the case of the Forest Reserves, squatters were required to obtain temporary cultivation permits to enable them to cultivate the land. In some cases where the forest had been heavily damaged, so-called "taungya permits" which combined food crop cultivation with

a reafforestation program, were issued.[71] The squatters were required to leave the Reserves when the two year reprieve ended on 31 March 1948. In the case of the rubber estates, owners were persuaded to retain their squatter population for two years in the interest of enhancing food production by the stipulation that a minimum of two per cent of the total acreage of the estate be planted with food crops beginning from March 1946.[72] TOLs were issued (also at the rate of one dollar per annum), to squatters on mining lands. Unlike those on Forest Reserves, these squatters were permitted to grow groundnuts and tapioca in addition to vegetables and other food crops. At the same time, control by Land Office officials was more relaxed and less stringent. This was because mine owners were more tolerant of the squatters because such communities had traditionally served as sources of cheap food and casual labour for the mines. It was only when the land was required for mining that the squatters needed to be evicted. This was not the case, however, for Chinese squatters occupying the Malay Reservation land; where Malay-Chinese intercommunal conflict had occurred, Malay rulers pressed for immediate eviction. Consequently, Chinese squatters were evicted from Sungei Manik and resettled on unreserved State land. In other areas Chinese squatters were not formally given two year reprieves, although TOLs were issued as a means of control. Finally, unless the land in question was being requested by particular departments for immediate use, squatters on unreserved State land were given TOLs and a reprieve of two years to grow food crops. On the whole, therefore, although the agricultural communities were officially regarded by the British authorities as "squatters", there were few evictions in the immediate post-war period. In the

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[71] Both permits were issued annually and the squatters were charged a renewal fee of one dollar per acre. The permits clearly stipulated that only short-term crops such as vegetables, sweet potatoes and dry rice could be grown. Forest Department Officials made periodic checks on squatters based on the register of permits. Squatters found planting food crops without permits after mid-1946 were forced to pay *compounds* (a charge less than a court fine levied by the Department). Those found planting tapioca or tobacco were subject to the same *compound* in addition to having their crops uprooted.

[72] In Perak all rubber estates exceeding 10 acres were allowed either a complete or partial remission of their quit rents down to a maximum of one dollar per acre per annum for a period of six years in exchange. In Kinta the total estate land planted with food crops amounted to 4,700 acres. Loh, *Beyond the Tin Mines*, pp.79-80.

few evictions that did occur (such as those on Malay Reservations), prior warning was always given and, at times, alternative land made available for resettlement.[73]

Overall, the promotion of food production by agricultural squatters achieved its aim. By December 1947 it was estimated that 3 060 acres were under wet *padi* and 2,050 acres under dry *padi* in Kinta. The amounts produced were 612,000 and 205,000 *gantangs* respectively. In addition, some 2,875 acres concentrated in Kanthan and Chemor in Ulu Kinta were planted with vegetables of which approximately 15,905 pikuls were exported annually between 1945 and 1947. It was also noted that 2,540 acres were planted with tapioca yielding 254,000 pikuls of tapioca products in 1947. Such acreages and production figures surpassed 1930 Depression figures when cultivation of these crops had reached their pre-war peaks. In all it was reported that 13,006 acres of land was under cultivation by squatters holding TOLs: 3,800 acres in the Ipoh sub-district, 5,860 acres in Kampar, and 3,406 in Batu Gajah.[74] Meanwhile, in March 1947 the Short-term Food Committee was disbanded and the responsibility for growing more food transferred to the Department of Agriculture. Under its charge rice production increased slightly but remained below pre-war production levels. It was only because of increased rice imports (which rose from 136,000 tons to 450,000 tons between 1946 and 1948), that the rice shortage problem was finally alleviated [75] Overall therefore, had it not been for production of other food crops by the squatters, Malaya would almost certainly have experienced famine in the immediate post-war period.[76]

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[73] In a few cases the squatters delayed eviction orders and demanded compensation for crops and buildings in addition to alternative land, before agreeing to move. In most instances the British authorities rejected such claims adopting the position that eviction cases revolved around issues of legality rather than equity or social justice. Squatters were viewed as illegal occupants of land and accordingly should not be compensated when moved.

[74] *Annual Report Kinta District, 1947*, cited in Loh, *Beyond the Tin Mines*, pp.82-83. If the acreage cultivated by squatters in Forest Reserves and others not in possession of TOLs (such as those in rubber estates) were included the total acreage and yields would be much higher.

[75] M.Rudner, "The Malaysian Post-War Rice Crisis: An Episode in Colonial Agricultural Policy", *Kajian Ekonomi Malaysia*, Vol.12, No.1, June 1975, pp.1-13.

[76] In 1949 the Committee appointed by the High Commissioner to investigate the squatter problem lauded the communities for playing a most important function by "serving as a reservoir for causal labour" and "producing foodstuffs over and above their own needs". *Report of Committee Appointed by his Excellency the High Commissioner to investigate the Squatter Problem*, 10 May 1949, quoted in Loh, *ibid.*, p.83

Coupled with the further mechanisation of the mining industry, food shortages and government encouragement of food production, there was an additional factor encouraging former tin miners to continue settlement in agricultural communities, namely the fact that many were no longer simply mine workers temporarily displaced from the mines but full-time cultivators with families.[77] In 1948 the British Resident explained:

> In the years before the war, the average Chinese labourer was a man who either had no wife or had a wife in China. He lived in lines set up by his employer, and took no interest in cultivation.
>
> Since the war, however, as a result of employment during the Japanese time and as a result of the great influx of Chinese women in the pre-war years, the average Chinese labourer has changed. During the Japanese time he settled down on the land to earn his living, built himself a hut, and often acquired a wife through the simple fact that there was no alternative employment for women. When liberation came, *he did not revert to his old life*; to begin with employment was still scarce, but as employment increased with the opening up of the mines...the male members of the families left their squatter houses and went to the places of employment and dwell there in the lines. But the squatter's house with his family remained in the background. To it he returned on holidays, and to it he returns when he is unemployed. A most all Chinese have their roots in the state in this manner and *a great change has therefore taken place*.[78]

The emergence of the Chinese family had important implications for labour in the mines. When free accommodation in the *kongsi*-house was offered to the miners after the war, they considered it "inadequate" and "out of style", demanding instead "separate quarters" that could accommodate families. In order to feed and clothe families the miners also demanded higher wages. But there were few jobs during the immediate post-war period that paid enough to cater for these needs. Not only were these inflationary times but wages were also extremely low. By and large wages in the mines were still only slightly higher than pre-war rates. Furthermore, wages remained inadequate because the wage-system as a whole was still geared towards the needs of the individual male immigrant-worker.

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[77] Whereas the ratio of Chinese men to women was 10:5 in 1931, by 1947 it was 10:8. Also between 1942 and 1947 the births of 61,740 Chinese male and 52,278 female babies were recorded in Perak. Furthermore, the proportion of children under fifteen years of age in the total Perak Chinese population had increased from 25.6 to 39.3 per cent between 1931 and 1947. The result of this growth in families coupled with travel restrictions during the war, was an increase in the percentage of locally-born Perak Chinese, from 31 to 65 per cent between 1931 and 1937. This further indicates the increasing permanency of Chinese settlement in Perak. Loh, *Beyond the Tin Mines*, pp.83-84.

[78] *Annual Report Perak, 1948*, pp.14-16 cited in *ibid.*, p.84 (emphasis added).

Given the lack of reform of the wage system and difficulties in fulfilling familial and social obligations, rural settlement and food cultivation offered the Chinese miners the best means to a livelihood during the immediate post-war period. From this perspective it offered even greater security than did employment on the mines. Therefore, the emergence of a normal familial pattern in the Perak Chinese population further contributed to the persistence of the post-war squatter communities.

A final point that can be made with regard to the Kinta squatters is the nature of their relationship with the MCP and the rise of militancy during the period 1945-1948. Many of the rural dwellers had supported the guerilla fighters of the MJAPA during the Japanese Occupation. This support had been channelled into local branches of the Malayan People's Anti-Japanese Union (MPAJU) which could be found in villages, towns and districts where anti-Japanese feelings were high. Through these loosely organised branches (which included MCP sympathisers as well as non-communists), food, clothes, recruits, funds and information were provided to the MPAJA.[79] With these connections the MPC had little difficulty in re-establishing its power among the squatter communities after the Japanese surrender. While the ultimate goal of the MCP - the creation of a socialist Malayan Democratic Republic - differed from the immediate socio-economic demands of the majority of squatters there was, nonetheless, a coincidence of interests. For instance, squatter protests against evictions channelled through the Perak Farmers' Association were invariably more effective; postponements and, on occasion, even withdrawals of eviction orders were often gained.

After the activities of the MPC in urban areas were vitiated by the introduction of increasingly repressive legislation, contact was re-established with supporters among the rural population. The MPAJA was renamed the Malayan Races Liberation Army (MPRLA) and

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[79] In some cases the local MPAJU formed groups of couriers and arranged guides to take MPAJA patrols through unfamiliar territory. Still others accompanied the MPAJA to their jungle camps where they grew food crops for the guerillas. The sum total of this build-up was a four-fold increase in the size of the MJAPA and the creation of a sympathetic mass base numbering hundreds of thousands by 1944. Sandhu, "Saga of the Squatter", pp.150-151.

recalled to the jungle, whence the MCP expected to launch its attack on the British. Thus the focus for communist activity shifted from the urban centres back to the squatter areas. The strategy of the MPC was to employ guerilla tactics and "to strike at the vitally important tin and rubber industries, bringing production to a standstill". The squatters became the main source of the MPRLA with the difference that they were now assisting the MPRLA against the British instead of the Japanese. To the squatters this distinction was irrelevant; the only government they had known was the government of the MPAJA which had "defeated" the Japanese and was now about to liberate them from their subsequent suppression. Attacks were subsequently made on estates and mines directed against the management in the hope of disrupting the labour force and production in general.[80] Scattered as they were in the jungle and on the fringes of estates the squatters also provided the ears, eyes, and a smokescreen for the Communists. Once among them the Communists were easily concealed from the security forces. In this way, the large number of Chinese squatters, including former tin miners, constituted the "squatter problem" which became critical with the declaration of Emergency in 1948. The solution of the "squatter problem" was therefore imperative if the Communists were to be defeated. To achieve this the government embarked on a massive program of resettlement of nearly half a million rural dwellers into more than 600 "new" settlements, a movement which subsequently remoulded the pattern of population distribution in Malaya.[81] With this movement a new chapter in the history of Chinese tin mining labour in Malaya had begun.

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[80] Large numbers of squatters were enrolled in the *Min Yuen* (Mass Organisation), the fifth column of the MCP. Many were armed and acted as part-time volunteers: rubber tappers, market gardeners or miners by day, and snipers by night. *The Fight Against Communist Terrorism in Malaya*, HMSO, London 1951, p.10 cited in Sandhu, "Saga of the Squatter", pp.150-151

[81] For a detailed study see K.S.Sandhu, "Emergency Resettlement in Malaya", *Journal of Tropical Geography*, Vol.18, 1964, pp.160-180.

CHAPTER 7. CONCLUSION.

The primary aim of this study was to provide an historical overview of Chinese labour in the Malayan tin mining industry over a period of approximately one hundred and fifty years, c.1800-1948. In so doing it was envisioned that the study would contribute to an understanding of Malayan economic history as well as provide some insight into contemporary Malaysian society. At the same time it was noted that there exists a lacuna in studies relating specifically to Chinese tin mining labour.

Given these considerations the significance of the study was twofold: labour's role as a factor of production in the development of the tin mining industry, and the contribution of Chinese tin miners as immigrant labourers to the development of a "plural society" in Malaysia. The broad themes examined in the course of the study included the issue of wage labour and the international division of labour; labour supply in the colonial and pre-colonial states; colonial labour policy; gender and wage labour; the relationship between capital and labour in production; and, class consciousness, ethnicity and worker organisation. In conclusion, summary comment can be made with regard to the these broad themes in general and to the conceptual framework proposed to underline an historical study of Chinese tin mining labour in particular.

It will be recalled that two approaches were suggested as the basis of a theoretical construct to underline an historical study of Chinese tin mining labour. The first approach centred on Myint's vent-for-surplus model of the process of economic growth in sparsely-populated underdeveloped countries. In this model Myint argued that the labour forces in colonial economies with large-scale mines and plantations took the form they did because of the type of wage-economy that developed, in particular the conscious adoption of a "cheap labour policy" by operators in these foreign enclaves. The second, more recent approach to the development of labour markets in Malaysia employed the concept of labour market

segmentation to explain the development of separate markets for labour. In modern labour theory the notion of segmentation posits that the national labour market is divided into various segments with little movement occurring between the different divisions. The central theme of segmentation is that workers with similar characteristics such as their human capital are treated or rewarded differently in different segments. In this theory social and institutional constraints play an important role in restricting the employment options of workers.

In terms of the latter approach Chinese tin mining labour, in many respects, provides illustration of a segmented labour market, in particular a division of labour along ethnic and occupational lines. Several different types of segmentation may be briefly identified. In the first instance, the foregoing study has emphasised that the bulk of the labour force employed in the development of the tin mining industry was Chinese. Although the Malays continued to work so-called "ancestral mines", the numbers involved were insignificant when compared to the number of Chinese in the industry. Even with the advent of European enterprise and capital-intensive production during the 20th century, the Chinese continued to constitute the bulk of mining labour.

Secondly, it may be argued that a "dual labour market" existed within the industry and that mobility between different work groups in each market was circumscribed. During the 19th century this was demonstrated by the division that existed between Chinese capitalists, mines advancers and headmen on the one hand, and the general mass of Chinese coolie labour on the other. This division was maintained by the system of indentured and (later) contract immigration, the influence of secret society organisations over labour and the credit-structure of business organisation on Chinese mines, especially the operation of revenue-farms and the prevalence of the truck system of payments which kept the majority of labourers indebted to their employers for extended periods of time. Even with the change to tribute mining (with its focus on small individual operations), during the latter decades of the century, the dependence of the tribute miner on the mines advancer underpinned mining operations. Consequently, few

Chinese coolies rose up the ranks of mining labour to become wealthy mine owners. Meanwhile, Chinese capitalists and mines advancers often enjoyed large profits, particularly if they held the multiple roles of mines advancer, tin-ore dealer, shopkeeper, mine owner and revenue-farmer. Although the advent of Western mining methods during the 20th century witnessed a changing pattern of employment with the growth in importance of wage-labour and a division of labour into specific tasks depending on skill and responsibility, nevertheless a division remained between the highly-paid European management and Chinese labour. This division was maintained by the joint-stock structure of European companies and the general requirements of large-scale and expensive capital-intensive production.

Labour market segmentation by gender is also evident in an examination of the situation of female *dulang* washers during the 1940s. This sexual division of labour was due to the historical development of mining labour which had been comprised almost exclusively of young male immigrants who had left their wives and families in China. Female workers, as relative late-comers to the industry, were therefore confined to the least-skilled and poorest paying jobs. This was despite the fact that *dulang* washers often became wealthy enough to own shares in Chinese mines or give loans to Chinese miners whom they trusted.

Fourthly, it may be argued that Chinese tin mining labour was segmented by geographical factors. Before the opening of the interior states by roads and railways in the latter decades of the 19th century, mines were accessible only by foot or river transport. As many mines were located in the inhospitable jungle frontier, mining labour was isolated from the bulk of the Malayan labour market located in the port cities and surrounds.

Summary observation may also conclude that Chinese tin mining labour exhibited the general characteristics of a secondary labour market. During the 19th century production was very labour-intensive with workers requiring little in the way of specific or generic skills. On open-cast mines the mainstay of production was the Chinese coolie who manually carried the tin-ore from the mine-pit to the surface, with the *chin-chia* used as a complement to, rather

than substitute for, mining labour. Furthermore, internal labour markets were generally undeveloped. The low skill requirements of mining and the prevalence of indentured labour (and the institutions that perpetuated it), coupled with the ready supply of immigrant *sin-khehs*, determined that there was little training or scope for advancement for the bulk of mining labour. Moreover, Chinese coolies were "disadvantaged" by their immigrant status. As landless immigrants of general peasant background they were channelled into the least desirable labour in the mines that indigenous labour was unwilling to perform. Generally, mining wages were determined by the demand for and supply of mining labour. However, although the wages received by the miners were relatively high when compared to other sectors of the economy, under the institutions of the credit-ticket, truck and revenue-farm systems the miners seldom received all the wages they earned. High labour turnover, the characteristic feature of secondary labour markets, was also evident. Mining employment was generally unrestricted with supply being maintained by the constant stream of fresh labour trying to escape poverty, overpopulation and political instability in the southern Chinese provinces. This high labour turnover, coupled with the Chinese capitalist's monopsony control over labour, meant that mining coolies possessed little bargaining power vis-a-vis their employers. Consequently, labour organisation on the mines was non-evident for much of the period under consideration. During the 19th century mining labour, being completely dominated by secret society organisations and constrained by its indentured status, could not form a pressure group. On the Chinese mines the coolies were controlled and exploited by their employers and headmen. When labour organisation did emerge during the 20th century, it was generally short-lived. Furthermore, the high labour turnover meant that employers had little interest in developing permanent employment relationships. Consequently, working and living conditions in the mines were very poor. As the employer/employee relationship was based (largely) on impersonal ties mining capital was more exorbitant in its demand for working value from labour. Indeed, the addiction of many mining coolies to gambling and opium smoking was

actively promoted by employers who were at the same time mines advancers and operators of revenue-farms.

Finally, it may be argued that the ethnic differentiation of Chinese labour in the tin mines was perpetuated both directly and indirectly by the colonial administration. Two particular examples may be highlighted. Firstly, for much of the period under consideration a permissive labour policy enabled immigration and labour regulation to be simplified so that labour was rapidly, conveniently and cheaply imported. At the same time, labour conditions were set at minimal standards to enable employers to reduce employment obligations as well as labour costs. Importantly, the absence of any effective government control over labour enabled Chinese capitalists and their secret societies to establish an *imperium in imperio* through which they dominated the lives and working conditions of the miners. Although the establishment of the Chinese Protectorate late in the 19th century abolished some of the abuses associated with the credit-ticket system, the inability of the Protectorate to regulate and supervise mining operations meant that the lives and working conditions of labourers were still very much controlled by the mine-owners, their headmen and their secret societies. Secondly, in the period from about 1910 onwards many Chinese labourers displaced from the tin mining industry (due to the demise of the open-cast sector, economic depression and production restriction and Japanese Occupation), moved into agricultural "squatter" communities on the jungle-fringe where they opened up small areas of land for food and other commercial crop cultivation. But, although the colonial government welcomed the practice as a short-term measure in order to avert labour unrest and relieve immediate post-depression and post-war food shortages, these land settlement schemes were generally obstructed by the administration. Occupation of land by Chinese agriculturalists was done so illegally as the government would not admit that the non-Malay cultivator had any right to expect permanent occupation if the land was required for urban, mining or industrial development. The only concession the administration made to Chinese peasants' (as distinct from Chinese capitalists') needs was the

granting of TOLs for the land in use. These licences forbade the cultivation of all but vegetable crops and were annually renewable at the discretion of the authorities. This form of land tenure was inimical to the interests of the cultivators but, it may be argued, illustrated the government's policy of differential access towards the Chinese which had as one of its aims the assurance of a steady supply of wage-labour available for the re-opening of the tin mines.

On the whole, however, the theory of labour market segmentation, as a theory derived from western experience, does not adequately support an historical study of Chinese tin mining labour in Malaya. Most significantly, it fails to satisfactorily explain the reasons behind Chinese dominance in the tin mining labour force. To address this question Chinese tin mining labour needs to be viewed in an international perspective. Here Myint's vent-for-surplus model provides a more plausible explanation. The applicability of Myint's model centres on the supply of tin mining labour and the promotion of a "cheap labour policy" by Chinese mining entrepreneurs. The primary stimulus to the adoption of a "cheap labour policy" was the absence of an indigenous proletariat from which to obtain an adequate supply of labour.

The foregoing study has emphasised that the rapid development of the Malayan tin mining industry during the 19th century was closely connected to the industrialisation of Europe and the United States and the increased demand for tin consequent upon the expansion of the British tin-plate industry. The rising prices this demand engendered stimulated prospecting in the Malay States and large deposits of tin-bearing land were discovered first in the 1840s around Lukut, Kuala Lumpur, and Larut and later in the 1880s in the Kinta Valley. However, while the development and areal spread of tin mining was greatly encouraged by the colonial government's policy of providing the inducements for increased production by private enterprise, these factors alone could not have achieved the rapid expansion needed to transform Malaya into the world's largest tin producer. An adequate supply of labour was also required to extract the metal.

Tin mining in the Malay States had been undertaken for centuries and up to the early decades of the 19th century the mines were controlled by local Malay chiefs with labour being provided (generally) by Malay miners. Then, from about 1820 onwards, small groups of Chinese began moving into the Malay States in search of tin. The discovery of substantial deposits in the interior states in the 1840s led to an influx of Chinese who quickly took over and developed the mines. The abundance of surface alluvial deposits that suited the utilisation of uncomplicated but superior Chinese mining techniques fostered the establishment of numerous small mining ventures. Low investment requirements and the availability of financing by mines advancers and their Straits merchant backers contributed to the relative ease of entry into the industry. By the late 1870s approximately four-fifths of the immigrant Chinese in the Malay States were directly involved in tin mining.

The labour situation in the tin mines in pre-colonial Malaya was influenced by a number of factors. In the early decades of the 19th century Malaya was land abundant but sparsely inhabited. Furthermore, widespread political instability discouraged non-subsistence production by the indigenous population. More importantly, however, pre-colonial society was not characterised by the capitalist relations of production usually understood to involve the exploitation of free wage-labour. Rather the peasant economy was built around the production of subsistence agriculture, in particular irrigated rice. As the peasantry had ready access to land on which to cultivate crops, there was no strong systematic tendency towards the creation of a class of "free" labour without access to a means of production. Neither did there exist any system similar to the hut or poll tax instituted in African countries through which to force the indigenous population into becoming wage-labourers. Instead, the Malay ruling class utilised the institutions of slavery, debt-bondage and corvee to meet their labour requirements. Under these arrangements tin mining was conducted mostly on a part-time basis on the outskirts of agricultural settlements in the foothills where surface alluvial deposits were easily accessible.

While demand for tin remained relatively low an equilibrium was reached between the tin deposits and the capacity of the Malay miners. However, as demand for tin increased and new deposits were discovered, a labour shortage developed. In the absence of a Malay proletariat the chiefs were forced to find an alternative labour supply. Attention naturally focused on the neighbouring Straits Settlements where the pool of "landless" wage-labour was growing rapidly due to the immigration of increasing numbers of Chinese. The chiefs mobilised labour by inviting immigrant Chinese to work the tin mines in the interior states. These miners marked the beginning of the floodtide of Chinese immigrants who began arriving in the Malay States from the 1820s. The Chinese immigrants distinguished themselves by their willingness and capacity for hard work strengthened by the purpose of making money to take home to China.

In addition to labour shortages the Malay chiefs also faced the need to inject increasing amounts of capital into the opening of newly-discovered deposits. As Straits Chinese capital was very responsive to the profitable opportunities in tin mining, the chiefs gradually turned to the merchants to provide the capital to work the mines. Initially, Chinese investments took the form of advances to the chiefs but as both the demand for tin and the need for development capital increased, the Straits merchants began to lend directly to the miners. Mines advancers in the Malay States provided the tin-mine owner-cum-employer with the "variable capital" (to feed, house and clothe the miners), as well as additional loans, in return for an exclusive right to purchase the output of the mine. Gradually, the Chinese capitalists and mines advancers assumed control of production. Malay political authority, being untutored in the art of government commensurate with the needs of large-scale economic development and divided by the contest for power and wealth made possible by the development of the tin resources, was incapable of governing the Chinese mining communities and providing the necessary stable conditions for the rapid development of the deposits. In the long-run, the Chinese

mining communities became so many foreign enclaves in the Malay social and economic fabric that they significantly influenced the development of a "plural society" in Malaya.

Despite various attempts by European capital to capture tin production during the 1880s and 1890s, the Malayan tin mining industry remained a Chinese monopoly until the early decades of the 20th century. While various technological conditions such as the abundance of easily accessible surface alluvial deposits favoured Chinese methods, the decisive factor promoting Chinese dominance in the industry was the labour situation; the Chinese capitalists' success in tin mining enterprise was contingent on maintaining exclusive and effective control over Chinese tin mining labour.

The characteristic feature of Chinese tin mining throughout the 19th century was its concentration on labour-intensive methods of production. As such changes in labour supply affected wages and, in the last analysis, the profitability of mining. Therefore, minimisation of the wage-bill was the key to viability and profitability of Chinese mines. In the absence of a local proletariat the Chinese capitalists chose to employ an immigrant proletariat that they then controlled through a multiplicity of economic and extra-economic means. The most important mechanisms of control were indentured immigration through the credit-ticket and (later) contract systems, secret society organisations and the operation of the truck and revenue-farm systems. These institutions of labour control underpinned the promotion of a "cheap labour policy" by Chinese mining entrepreneurs.

Although the demand for labour was high, by suppressing wages to their lowest levels and reducing the total expenditure required to maintain the labour force, Chinese mining capitalists were able to adhere to a "cheap labour policy". The promotion of such a policy provided the means for Chinese-owned mines to produce at the lowest possible cost, thus making competition by use of less labour-intensive techniques difficult. The operation of such a policy was reinforced by the ready supply of "transient" immigrant labour flowing from the southern Chinese provinces. These immigrants were willing to work under the conditions

prevailing in the mines because of their burning desire to escape the harsh conditions of over-population, poverty and political instab lity at home; they were unable to find work even at such low wages in China. The intention for many was to work in the Malay States for only a short period of time in order to save enough money and then return home to China. The overall effect was to depress the wage-level in the mines.

The successful promotion of the "cheap labour policy" by Chinese mining entrepreneurs during the 19th century was accomplished at the expense of mining labour. In essence the relationship between capital and labour in the mines was one of subordination and exploitation of Chinese workers by capital in the industry. This exploitation and subordination was due largely to the transient nature of Chinese immigration and the absence of a class structure among mining labour. Of the immigrant mining labourers the *sin-khehs* were the most exploited because of their indentured status. Through the operation of the truck and revenue-farm systems, credit-ticket immigration and the influence of secret society organisations, indentured labourers were usually unable to free themselves from debt even though their period of indenture may have expired. Even "free" workers could become bonded after becoming similarly indebted. Thus while the mines advancers (and their Chinese merchant backers), enjoyed the greates profits from the mining enterprise, Chinese mining labourers could seldom make a fortune. Even with the popularity of tribute mining following the opening of the Kinta deposits, business organisation based on a system of credit kept the poorly capitalised mine-owner reliant on the mines advancer for the working costs of the mine. As such the majority of immigrants failed to realise their dream of returning home as wealthy men.

By the turn of the 20th century the conditions that had initially led to the system of Chinese mining began to change, undermining the basis for its continued operation. One important factor was the exhaustion of known accessible surface deposits; the mining of deeper deposits involved different techniques requiring heavier investments in equipment and

less use of direct labour. At the same time, the government actively facilitated the ascendance of Western, especially British, mining enterprise. This objective was illustrated from 1890 onwards by changes to government policy in the spheres of revenue collection and in the granting and resumption of tin land. The opinion of Western capital also began to carry more weight in mining legislation than that of the Chinese miners. The government's introduction of price control measures during the 1920s and its participation in successive International Tin Agreements during the period 1931-1946 were also aimed at rescuing British capital which historically had been relatively inflexible, and hence more vulnerable, to market fluctuations. Perhaps the most decisive factor contributing to the decline of Chinese mining after the turn of the century, however, was the weakening of the Chinese capitalists' monopsony control of labour which had been a constant source of frustration to other prospective employers, especially British mining companies. Legislative measures taken to "free" the Chinese labour market and to "protect" Chinese workers centred on increasing supervision of labour and involved the outlawing of secret societies and the abolition of indentured immigration and the credit-ticket system, revenue-farms and the system of truck payments.

The overall implications of these changes for Chinese tin mining labour were significant. Firstly, with the advent of mechanised production the Malayan tin mining industry witnessed a growth in the importance of wage-labour (*nai-chiang*, daily-rated etc.), and a greater division of labour according to skill requirements, particularly on the larger Chinese gravel-pump mines. Secondly, a number of factors contributed to the emergence of worker organisation on the mines. Combined with the weakening of the Chinese capitalists' monopsony control over labour were such factors as worker discontent over continuing deprivations from the depression and war years (food shortages, high living standards, poor living and working conditions), communist agitation, fluctuations in labour supply (particularly after 1933), and the consolidation and growth of a locally-born and permanently-settled Chinese labour force. At the same time, improvements in communications and rapid economic

growth offered alternative employment opportunities which encouraged absconding from the mines and diminished the efficacy of the indenture system. It also encouraged employers to improve working conditions, including wage-rates in order to retain their labour forces. Freed from the tight control of Chinese capital, Chinese mining labour thus became aware of its bargaining position. These developments culminated in a number of strikes throughout the decades to 1948 that forced employers to hire wage-labour on its own terms. Concessions gained by striking miners included the abolition of the contract system, improved working and general living conditions, the provision of social insurance and compensation, and increased mining wages.

Employers were generally prepared to accede to the miner's demands for higher wages and better working conditions during this period because of the worker's willingness to face dismissal. As many of the miners displaced from the industry from about 1910 onwards had reverted to food and cash crop production in agricultural "squatter" communities, this meant that workers had an alternative means of livelihood; the food that was produced by the squatters was usually sufficient for subsistence living with some surplus that, in periods of food shortage, could be readily sold in markets. In Kinta the bulk of squatter the community was comprised of displaced tin mining coolies with families. Using Myint's model, this movement of Chinese labour from mining to agricultural production can be viewed as a deproletarianisation of labour, quite the reverse of the usual direction of movement. At the same time, the government's policy of non-permanent land title for non-Malays encouraged the creation of a class of "free" workers without access to a permanent means of production. Chinese agriculturalists, having limited access to land, therefore formed a reservoir of "casual" wage-labour for the mines. A largely unstated reason for the administration's reluctance to grant security of land tenure centred on the pro-capitalist nature of colonialism in British Malaya. In Kinta this bias was ultimately expressed in the form of the state's support for

mining, in particular the European capital-intensive sector, over the interests of the agricultural squatter community which consisted essentially of labourers.

Underscoring the gains made by Chinese tin miners in the decades of the 20th century, however, was the gradual substitution of capital for labour in the industry. The technological basis of tin mining became modernised with the introduction and rapid development of capital-intensive production by Western enterprise. By virtue of their superior technology Western companies began to gain hold in the industry and gradually eroded Chinese monopoly of tin production. In terms of Myint's model, it may be identified that the successful introduction of Western enterprise was influenced by the rapid growth of the industry during the latter decades of the 19th century which caused an initial shortage of labour. At the same time, the strengthening position of labour gave rise to increased disputes and higher labour costs. Ultimately, the gap between wages and the short-run productivity of labour encouraged greater investment and use of mechanised production that reduced reliance on labour.

The eventual outcome of these developments was demise of the labour-intensive open-cast sector, particularly those mines operated by small Chinese mine-owners. This demise occurred in part because of the depletion of easily accessible surface tin deposits, but also because of the introduction by the colonial state of a series of laws and administrative practices that were disadvantageous to small Chinese miners. The land occupied by open-cast miners was subsequently forfeited and bought over by larger and wealthier companies. Only the larger and better-funded Chinese mines adopted new techniques; the smaller operations relying on more labour-intensive techniques continued but became increasingly marginal to the industry as a whole. Generally, the administration's promotion of Western enterprise was accomplished at the expense of the Chinese sector. Thus during the operation of the tin agreements mining interests in the FMS, represented by predominantly British interests, agreed to lower release quotas for the world market. The small, predominantly Chinese producers preferred large quotas, knowing that when the quota was small, the bigger European producers could fulfil it

themselves through pooling production and by manipulation, whereas small producers supplied tin only when the quota was large; they were the last to produce and the first to shut down under conditions of restriction. With the bulk of the domestic assessment of productive capacity allocated to dredging operations, the monopolisation of the industry by Western enterprise was reinforced, resulting in the closure of many smaller mines and supporting a redistribution of production from the Chinese to the European sector. During the post-war period, the aid given to Western mining companies enabled them to reassert their dominance by 1947. As a result of loans being used for the purchase of new mining equipment, an even higher stage of mechanisation was reached in the industry. On the other hand, the majority of small-scale Chinese mines that had been operating in the industry before the war were not reopened because their reserves were too small to warrant capital expenditure especially with increased production costs. Moreover, open-cast miners were excluded from receiving government loans. Overall, the combined effect of the structural changes in the industry and the increasing mechanisation of tin production was a reduction in total employment in the industry. The largest reduction in employment occurred in the Chinese labour-intensive hydraulic and open-cast mines.

By the late 1940s the situation of Chinese tin mining labour was again headed for change. The large number of Chinese tin miners who had turned to agricultural pursuits actually constituted a "squatter" problem in the post-war era as the returning British administration sought to re-establish law and order throughout the country generally, and to reassert its administrative authority over land matters specifically. At the same time, the government and employers were intent on restricting trade union activity and destroying the influence of the MCP before Independence. Ultimately, the policy to counter communism and control labour became embroiled in the Emergency regulations of June 1948. This date therefore constitutes a convenient point of termination for an historical study of Chinese labour in the Malayan tin mining industry.